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Universities are beset with many demands to join in social action. Some of these demands run counter to the traditional purposes of the university: the production and transmission of knowledge. Universities' responses range from isolation or withdrawal as recently espoused by Barzun in The American University to a call for direct social action which carried to its extreme could make the university a service station, a pseudo-governmental agency. Neither of these positions is acceptable, and universities must find a balance between isolation and invasion. Scholarship cannot be divorced from the world of reality, but scholars must be given some protection from the demands of daily action programs. At the same time, it would be useful to free some professors for a time from their research and teaching roles so that they may participate fully in action programs. Or the university could employ action people to serve as liaison between those who study and those who practice. The university could also spin off into related but separate organizations many developmental and dissemination tasks based upon the work of scholars. Some of this spin off might involve the talents often found in business firms. (AM)

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Section 8
Monday morning, March 3

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE DEMAND FOR SOCIAL ACTION*

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I have rephrased the topic posed for this section to read, "Higher Education and the Demand for Social Action." In many ways it is presumptuous to suggest such a title. There are over 2,000 institutions of higher education in the United States. Some are private, some public. Some are complex universities, some are liberal arts colleges, and some are non-degree granting institutions. Some are national and indeed international institutions, others are essentially state and regional centers, and still others serve chiefly the clientele in a local community.

In my view, we are fortunate to have this diversity of institutions. Clearly, however, if we could develop a suitable taxonomy of institutions, we could and should say somewhat different things about the relationships of each set of institutions to social action. The scope of that task is far beyond what we can do today.. Instead, I shall speak of the university, particularly the graduate divisions of the university, and social action.

The rising expectations or demands for social action come from many sources. Government, particularly national government, frequently turns to the university. Scholars who are specialists in foreign affairs, domestic problems, fiscal matters, and in other areas are often drafted and made key advisors to the administration and the Congress. Even more significant, however, is the encouragement, almost the seduction on the part of some federal agencies, that the universities join in the action. For instance, the U.S. Office of Education requires that school districts have partners in the planning and operation of Title III projects under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Universities are frequently sought as desirable partners in such enterprises.

One of the oldest ties between universities and government is found in the Department of Agriculture. This partnership was begun with the creation of land grant colleges over a century ago and has been a major force in the development of agriculture in this country. The effectiveness of this partnership has impressed many planners including those in the areas of defense, space, medicine, and education. Federal funds in all of these areas have been made available to universities for training and research purposes.

Related to the expectations held by the government, are the demands growing out of the civil rights revolution. That movement has tended to focus on such matter as jobs, health, housing, and education. Few universities have been able to remain immune to these concerns. In the institution I know best, many departments have been active in providing technical help to a Negro community in the

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development of a model cities proposal. Turning more specifically to education the civil rights movement is inevitably concerned with the improvement of schools in the inner city. Our own Graduate School of Education for instance, is currently involved in three major projects designed to seek such improvement.

Increasingly, the business sector of our society has turned to the universities. These expectations helped create the business schools and the bureaus of business and economic research. Recently, we have turned to business, presumably as the repository of managerial skills, for help with our social and economic problems. In the field of education alone, over a score of large business firms have been organized for the purpose of coping with educational problems. In turn, many of these firms have sought relationships with universities or with individual scholars at universities for help in such areas as motivation, learning, and curriculum development. As with government, some scholars are being coopted into business organizations and in other cases business is attempting to set up cooperative relationships with selected segments of universities.

Still another demand for action on the part of universities is given voice by the student protest movement. While some protestors undoubtedly use these demands to embarrass, and if possible destroy universities, many students are genuinely concerned that universities appear to be responsive to the military, to big business, and to the wealthy and unresponsive to the poor and the disadvantaged. Sometimes universities are seen as relentless in acquiring property, much of which represents housing for poor people. Universities have also been seen as too willing to cooperate with the military in the perpetration of an indefensible war. In a very real sense, universities are being asked to desist in doing some things and to take up action programs in other areas. Some students appear to have little confidence that present university faculty members and administrators can make universities relevant to present social needs, hence they propose that students be given a place on university policy making bodies.

Clearly, universities are beset with many and often conflicting demands. Moreover, many of these demands run counter to the traditional purposes of the university: the production and transmission of knowledge. As a result, universities are responding in different ways. At one extreme is the position of isolation. The essence of this position, recently espoused by Barzun,[1] is that universities will destory their major reason for existing if they respond to all of the calls for social action. In these terms, the sociologist is to help us understand society, not to lead a crusade for its reconstruction. Likewise, the educator should describe and explain what is happening in city schools but not get involved in their reconstitution. There is much to support this position. Scholars are in short supply. Their energies can easily be drained off into action programs and if this be done the continuing quest for new knowledge will stop. Moreover, scholars are seldom efficient action-people, hence they will probably perform their action roles badly.

At the other extreme there is the position that the university itself should become an instrument for direct social action. This view was probably present in the establishment of the land grant colleges and is often expressed as one of the

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[1]Jacques Barzun, The American University, New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

on the professor taking leave is the employment of action people by the university who can serve as liaison between those who study and those who practice. Again, universities need enough flexibility to follow such a practice on a selective basis.

As a fourth suggestion, universities should probably spin off certain operational or action programs. We have a long-standing example of this device in the field of agriculture. Along with the development of agronomy and other agricultural sciences, came the creation of the agricultural extension division. The extension agent became the middle man between the scientist on one hand and the farmer on the other. While extension agents had some university status, they were also made part of a separate organization with its own goals and procedures.

In other areas, as in agriculture, this means the creation of new institutions that can stand or fall on their own merits and not jeopardize the central functions of the university. A number of universities have followed this path in the creation of research foundations and similar organization. Recent programs of the federal government such as the establishment of research and development centers in education have been used by some institutions to develop related but auxiliary institutions. Such institutions seem to thrive best when they can tap university talent for ideas but employ special personnel to perform many of the developmental tasks.

The creation of regional educational laboratories was also a step in the direction of creating new institutions independent of universities and other agencies. It was thought that these institutions might appropriately perform developmental and dissemination services which universities find it difficult to provide. The best of these centers appear to base their programs upon some body of knowledge generated by scholars and then procede to make this knowledge available to and usable by practitioners in the school.

In terms of spin off, it seems entirely possible that some of the newly organized business firms can also build on the research being done at the university. The gap between the establishment of knowledge in the world of scholarship and the application of knowledge is a large one. Again the tasks of development and dissemination must be undertaken. The packaging of this knowledge for use in operational agencies and the promotion of such use may be tasks that business can perform better than can universities.

In summary, I have suggested that universities are beset with many demands to join in social action. Responses to these demands may be seen as isolation or withdrawal on one extreme and that of a service station on the other. Neither extreme is acceptable. Somehow universities must find a way of achieving a balance between isolation and invasion. Scholars need to deal with reality but they need some protection from daily action programs. In many areas universities might spin off into related but separate organizations many developmental and dissemination tasks based upon the work of the scholars. Some of this spin off might involve the talents often found in business firms.

purposes of the more recently organized community colleges. But such a demand upon major universities is relatively new. Carson argues this position when he says, "Our society is desperately seeking the talent that will better our cities, improve our schools, lengthen our lives, overcome racial tensions, and find solution to international ills."[2] Much of this talent Carson believes is in our universities. The case is a persuasive one. Yet, carried to the ultimate, the university would become very much a service station, a pseudo-governmental agency.

I do not believe that universities can accept as an implementing principle either the position of isolation or that of the service station. Somewhere between these extremes we must evolve a balance that will protect objective inquiry on one hand and encourage sensitivity to social problems on the other. I do not know all the ways by which this is to be done and even among major graduate schools there will undoubtedly be local variations, but a few suggestions will be made. First, scholars should deal with reality. In education, for instance, we should no longer assume that schools exist only in suburban communities. Rather, we should recognize that a great proportion of our children and youth are going to school in large urban centers where much of what is taught seems irrelevant, where many teachers find their pupils incompatible, where large bureaucracies and teacher's unions combine to increase inflexibility, and where many pupils and parents are alienated and angry. To conduct research and training programs in education where these realities are ignored would appear to be a disservice all around. To cope with such realities professors will need to maintain ways of experiencing such reality through observation and other means. While my example is in education, much the same could be said about professional schools in medicine, law, and social service, and in many of the social science disciplines. Genuine scholarship cannot be divorced from the world of reality.

As a second suggestion most scholars should be given some protection from the demands of daily action programs. Again, to use education as an example, a student of bureaucracy needs to observe bureaucracy at first hand. But he also needs time to develop concepts about bureaucracy, to test these concepts in the field, to interact with his students and his colleagues about these concepts, and to report the results of his inquiry so that a wider audience can share in his knowledge. He will have little opportunity to perform these tasks or he will perform them poorly if in addition he is involved in daily efforts to change the bureaucracy he is attempting to understand. He may, of course, become interested in a study of the effect of certain influences on bureaucracy, but even here the professor probably has to choose between the role of investigator and that of change agent.

This leads to a third suggestion. Some professors may be freed for a time from their research and teaching roles so that they may participate fully in action programs. Mr. Kissinger, currently serving as President Nixon's foreign relations advisor, would appear to fall in this category. In our own case, we gave a professor a leave-of-absence so that he might assume the directorship of an experimental school project. I suspect that many professors would not find such action roles compatible nor would many of them be very effective, but for those who can be effective, universities should permit such flexibility. A variation

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[2]John J. Carson, "Public Service and Higher Education," Charles G. Dobbins & Calvin B.T. Lee (Editors) in Whose Goals for American Higher Education. Washington D.C., Amer. Council on Education, p. 89.